

**MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS UPDATE**

**BRIEFING PAPER**

Prepared for the

**JANUARY 2005 TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING**

Prepared by: Lisa Murdock, M&O Communications Manager

Reviewed by: Gummada Murthy, Director, Maintenance & Operations

Approved by: John F. Conrad, Assistant Secretary for Engineering & Regional  
Operations

**PURPOSE:**

Allow the Commission to witness the signing of the recently updated Joint Operations Policy Statement (JOPS) with Transportation Secretary Doug MacDonald and Washington State Patrol Chief Lowell Porter.

**ACTION/OUTCOME:**

None.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 1999 WSDOT and WSP joined together and formalized the first edition of the Joint Operations Policy Statement (JOPS). JOPS documents joint policy positions between the two agencies regarding issues of mutual interest in the operations of Washington State Highways. The 2005 JOPS will be the third edition since 1999.

**DISCUSSION:**

The organizational alignment of the two agencies in JOPS addresses a variety of issues such as

- Co-locating operations
- Budget initiatives
- Data-sharing
- Traffic management
- Commercial Vehicles
- Wireless communication
- Washington State Ferries
- Transportation System Security
- Safety Rest Areas
- Policy performance measures
- Policy training
- Policy update process

The purpose of the latest edition of JOPS is to update names and policies within the document and recertify each agency's commitment to the policy. The policy, roles and actions identified in each section of the document have proven to work well and huge strides have been made in incident management, clearance times, and coordination.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Once the latest JOPS is signed, the agencies will continue to work together to coordinate efforts, debrief incidents and policies, and improve processes as pertains to the Washington State Highways and ultimately the taxpaying citizens.

For general information contact John Bruun, State Incident Response Manager, (360) 705-7287.

###

**MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS UPDATE**

**BRIEFING PAPER**

Prepared for the

**JANUARY 2005 TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING**

Prepared by: Lisa Murdock, M&O Communications Manager

Reviewed by: Gummada Murthy, Director, Maintenance & Operations

Approved by: John F. Conrad, Assistant Secretary for Engineering & Regional  
Operations

**PURPOSE:**

Present information to the Commission of the Governor's recognition related to WSDOT's contribution to the Amber Alert Web Portal (AAWP).

**ACTION/OUTCOME:**

None.

**BACKGROUND:**

One year ago this month, several state agencies joined forces to implement an AMBER Alert Web Portal. This effort aimed to create a statewide action plan for getting the word out as quickly as possible when children are abducted. Enlisted agencies included the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, the Washington State Association of Broadcasters, the Washington State Patrol, the Chief Washington Military Department, WSDOT, and the Washington State Department of Information Systems.

The Washington Statewide AMBER Alert plan established uniform criteria for use when any authorized entity requests AMBER Alert activation. The Amber Alert Web Portal ([www.AMBERAlert911.com](http://www.AMBERAlert911.com)) allows the state patrol to send information on a missing child simultaneously to thousands of sources, including law enforcement, broadcasters and the public, via pagers, cell phones, e-mail and faxes.

The Web portal provides a unified place to find detailed information about the person. It was launched in July.

**DISCUSSION:**

The Washington State Department of Transportation, along with the other participating agencies, earned the Governor's Award for Quality and Performance Nov. 29 for its contributions in implementing the Web portal system. "I am very proud of all that we've been able to accomplish together for Washington," the Governor said. "The improvements we've made in state government are a direct reflection of our outstanding state workforce. I believe Washington has the top state employee team in the country."

The Governor presented WSDOT with a plaque listing key employees from several agencies who worked together to implement the Web portal, including four from WSDOT:

John Bruun  
Jim Shanafelt  
Lisa Murdock  
Walter (Hal) Weiblen

WSDOT will continue to make every effort to support the AAWP.

For general information contact Jim Shanafelt, State Traffic Operations Engineer, (360) 705-7282.

###

**MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS UPDATE**

**BRIEFING PAPER**

Prepared for the

**JANUARY 2005 TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING**

Prepared by: Lisa Murdock, M&O Communications Manager

Reviewed by: Gummada Murthy, Director, Maintenance & Operations

Approved by: John F. Conrad, Assistant Secretary for Engineering & Regional  
Operations

**PURPOSE:**

Update the Commission on the status and most recent developments of the 511 Travel Information phone line.

**ACTION/OUTCOME:**

None.

**BACKGROUND:**

Over the past decade, more than 300 travel information telephone numbers sprung up across the country to deliver the real-time information that helps travelers with their trip decisions. In 1999 the U.S. Department of Transportation petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for a three-digit dialing code to make it easier for consumers to access these travel information services. The FCC assigned "511" to the transportation community on July 21, 2000.

In July 2003, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) launched its voice-activated 511 travel information system.

**DISCUSSION:**

Since its deployment, WSDOT's worked closely with other states and its customers to refine the system that provides information about:

- Washington State Ferries
- Mountain pass conditions
- Roadway conditions and construction information anywhere in the state
- Real-time traffic information for Seattle highways and I-5 in Central Tacoma
- 511 for Oregon
- and more

## **IMPROVEMENTS:**

The most recent improvement to 511 is the addition of a touch-tone option. WSDOT implemented the new option to ease caller frustration when the system couldn't understand callers' voices. Most cell phone microphones are designed to pick up any nearby background noises, which makes it very challenging for a computer to separate the speech from the noise. The new option alleviates the problem by letting callers use a touch-tone option.

The rollout of the touch-tone option also spurred the identification of trouble-areas throughout the state that were unable to connect to 511 using certain cell or landline phone companies. WSDOT worked with local phone companies in each area to alleviate the disconnects.

WSDOT worked closely with Oregon State to sort out a way for those near the border to get the state's info they wanted. Both state's systems now have a process for transferring to the other state if so desired.

## **USAGE:**

The 511 system is becoming increasingly more popular, especially as the cold weather sets in and motorists get concerned about mountain pass conditions. The usage rate for November - 63,661 calls - doubled that of October - 32,725 calls, and December's numbers showed the trend continuing to rise with 116,000 calls.

## **NEXT STEPS:**

This month WSDOT is implementing a phone survey into the 511 system and will follow in the coming months with a usability test. After the usability testing is completed, it is anticipated that the voice side of the 511 system will be modified to be more like the touch-tone menu. Idaho is planning to start a 511 system by the end of 2005, and a connection between the two systems is being planned.

For general information contact Pete Briglia, State ITS Engineer, (206) 543-3331 or WSDOT's 511Website at: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/511/](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/511/).

###